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American Irish Newsletter - December 1996

American Ireland Education Foundation - PEC

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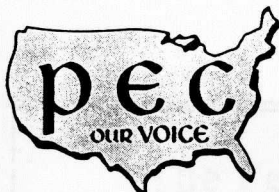
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AMERICAN IRISH NEWSLETTER

Political Education Committee of the American Ireland Education Foundation

Volume 21, Number 12

December 1996

PEC Needs Your Financial Support NOW !

Dear PEC Members and Subscribers,

Please don't forget PEC for Christmas! Your financial support is needed immediately to assure that PEC will be in a position to continue its operations and to respond in a big way to the hoped for IRA ceasefire and new peace process.

Even with a new IRA ceasefire, **peace with justice in Ireland is not inevitable**. This is why the PEC must immediately contact by mail tens of thousands of concerned Americans across the United States. We will need these good people to contact President Clinton in a demonstration of unity behind the peace process and the nationalist agenda. If there is no new ceasefire and the peace process continues to flounder, we will still need your support to pressure the British and Irish governments to move the process forward and come up with a solution.

Also, so that we can intensify the pressure on the British government to apologize to the Irish people for causing the terrible consequences of Ireland's Great Hunger, we will be inviting these people, many for the first time, to get active in the apology campaign.

An apology is vital to the success of the peace process: it will begin the necessary healing process.

As you know, PEC is the American Irish community's leading grassroots action network. PEC and its members are the people who make the issues by generating the necessary letters, phone calls, postcards, etc., to the President and other people important to the peace process.

Do not be misled into thinking that all Irish American organizations and newspapers are action networks: **NOT AT ALL!** For the most part, Irish American organizations and newspapers only discuss the issues. They do not organize and direct action. That is the specialty of the PEC. In other words, without PEC network involvement there are no significant letter-writing or phone-call campaigns. These important campaigns have been very effective.

Please take the following steps:

1. **Immediately send the PEC as generous a donation as you can afford.** If it would be easier for you, we recommend that you charge your donation (Visa/MasterCard only). To charge call (800) 777-6807. If you would prefer to charge your donation through a PEC staff member, call Tuesday thru Friday, 9AM to 5PM. To mail in your donation, use the coupon on the last page. Make check payable to American Ireland Education Foundation and mail to: AIEF, 54 South Liberty Drive, Stony Point, NY 10980. All contributions are tax-deductible.

2. **Write the letters requested in the Action Requests column on page six.** These letters are very important in furthering the issues we are currently pursuing.

In unity,
John J. Finucane
National President

OUR VIEW

Now that the election is over, Americans concerned about peace with justice in Ireland have good reason to be happy with the results. While we understand that some may be disappointed with the reelection of President Clinton and/or the continued Republican control of Congress, when it comes to our issues, we couldn't ask for a better combination.

President Clinton's record on Irish issues is second to none. He was the first president to take an active role in the Irish peace process and the first to place Northern Ireland near the top of his agenda. Without pressure from the White House, the peace process would not have even gotten off the ground. Irish nationalists need a sympathetic voice in the White House who will give them a fair shake. We need a White House which will pursue an even-handed policy and counterbalance the anglophilia that emanates from many areas in our government. Put simply, Ireland needs the boost that Bill Clinton has provided.

Now that Bill Clinton has been reelected, Irish-Americans don't have to worry about the prospects of John McCain or James Baker coordinating America's Irish policy. We don't have to worry about a return to the blindly pro-British policy on Ireland. It is no secret that the British government was hoping for a Dole victory. The revelation that British companies poured millions of dollars into Dole's campaign is only further proof that we were right to be apprehensive about a Dole administration.

On the other hand, this past Republican Congress has made great strides on the Irish issue. Congressional hearings, MacBride principles legislation and the strong position that this Congress has taken in support of peace and justice in Ireland will continue. All notable friends of Ireland from both parties won reelection and one of our greatest friends on Capitol Hill, Rep. Ben Gilman, will still head the International Relations Committee.

For Irish America it is the best of both worlds.

Offensive Situations

by Paul Newman, New York

An offensive situation can occur at any time or any place. While vacationing in Charleston, South Carolina, Connecticut PEC State Director Frank O'Day, his wife and family were subjected to the following anti-Irish bigotry, as were other tourists on the bus. A tour guide employed by Old South Carriage Tours described to a full carriage of tourists (many from around the world) Charleston's Hibernian Hall as, "All Irish, all white, all Catholic, all drunk, all the time." This is a popular tour, taken by thousands of tourists each year. This bigoted stereotype, that the Irish are not only drunks, but also more racist and sexist than the general population is an outrage and totally unacceptable to all self-respecting Americans of Irish heritage.

Please write the following in your own words or as is to: David Compton, Proprietor, Old South Carriage Tours, 14 Anson St., Charleston, SC 29402.

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GREAT HUNGER AWARENESS CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR: Frank Morris, Jr., 821 Briarwood Ln, Camp Hill, PA 17011-(717) 737-7013

NATIONAL ORGANIZER: Pete Foley, 3177 Villa Ave. #3H, Bronx, NY 10468-(718)933-7196

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NYC Fire Department

Dear Mr. Compton,

It has come to my attention that one of your bus tour guides described the local Hibernian Hall and the Irish in a derogatory manner: "All Irish, all white, all Catholic, all drunk, all the time." It is an outrage that one of your employees, obviously an ignorant and bigoted person, would make such a statement to a group of tourists, some of whom were of Irish heritage. Please advise your employees to discontinue such ignorant practices.

Sincerely

Suggestion: Include a copy of this article with your letter to Mr. Compton.

Send Offensive Situations to: Paul Newman,
9 Deltic Road, New City, NY 10956

Irish Americans Make Their Mark

The results are in and Bill Clinton will be our President for the next four years. What is most important for those concerned with the issue of peace with justice in Ireland is that the Irish peace process was an important issue during the campaign and the Irish policies of both candidates played a role in determining the outcome.

For almost 22 years, the American Irish Political Education Committee (PEC), a committee of the American Ireland Education Foundation, has worked through the democratic process to bring Irish issues to the forefront of American foreign policy and the American political scene. 1996 was a watershed year in this respect.

In the past, with the exception of Bill Clinton's 1992 campaign, Irish issues were all but ignored by the Democratic and Republican national campaigns. This year was very different. Previous campaigns took the Irish vote for granted. Democrats usually relied on the fact that Irish Americans/Irish were traditionally in their corner. Republicans focused on the conservatism of many in the Irish American community and hoped to woo the Irish vote based on their positions on social issues, especially abortion.

Election 96 has changed all of this. For the most part, past Presidential candidates had no public Irish peace policies. They simply allowed England to dictate policy. If anyone had predicted that the Presidential candidates Irish policies would be debated, one might run the risk of being declared a lunatic.

The fact that Ireland was an issue in this campaign and on the minds of many millions of American voters is due in large part to the determination and effectiveness of PEC. It was the PEC, and only the PEC, that, since November 1993, continuously reached out to concerned people, asking that they urge Senator Dole to publicly adopt (declare via the mainstream news media) a similar Irish peace policy to that of President Clinton, and to

promise that, if elected, he would not return America to a pro-British foreign policy on Ireland.

It was PEC's plan that both candidates would offer similar positions on the peace process, guaranteeing that no matter who won the election, Irish nationalist/republican interests would be protected.

The fact that Senator Bob Dole would not publicly make the commitments requested by PEC was a godsend for Clinton. It was Dole's failure to cooperate that caused PEC to go public with its request of Dole. We placed costly advertisements calling for his public commitment in major newspapers in seven states and carried out direct mailings to tens of thousands of American Irish throughout the U.S. We also placed similar ads in all Irish American newspapers. We reached millions of prospective Irish American voters. PEC created a sense of expectation in Irish America.

PEC received angry calls from Dole's office and the Republican National Committee-- a testament to just how effective we were.

The strong Irish record of President Clinton was an important factor in his reelection. Even the fiercest critic of the President, domestically or ethically, should give him credit for his Irish policy. Clinton's willingness to stand up to the British government and grant Gerry Adams a visa in 1992 was the turning point in the peace process. Irish America has long been clamoring for a central US role in the search for peace in Ireland.

The Dole campaign's attempt to court the Irish vote was inept. Bob Dole was obviously hurt by Irish-American anxiety at the prospects for a return to the blindly pro-British policies of previous administration as highlighted by PEC. But, more importantly Dole didn't make the necessary effort to reassure Irish Americans or even make his future Irish policy clear. Many Irish-Americans would have voted for

Dole if he made commitments to support current US policy towards Ireland. When the Dole campaign finally answered inquires and calls for him to support the peace process with statements along the lines of "yeah I support peace in Ireland," Irish-Americans were unconvinced.

But what put the nail in Dole's Irish coffin is the package that you would receive in a Dole administration. A Dole victory would have likely brought about the unhappy prospect of the "rule Britannia" crowd like James Baker, John McCain and the rest of the Anglophiles in the Republican party holding top positions.

A number of events sealed Dole's fate with Irish-Americans. They were: Dole's refusal to repudiate James Baker's attacks on Clinton's Irish policy at the Republican Convention; The publishing of a Republican National Committee Document entitled "Embracing Terrorists and Spurning Allies," which was largely along the lines of Baker's attacks and confirmed the imminent danger of a return to the "special relationship" if Dole were elected; Dole's refusal to say if he would change US policy towards Northern Ireland if elected; and Dole's cheap shot at Gerry Adams (calling him a terrorist) on the campaign trail.

The power of the Irish-American vote and the importance of our issues is now recognized by both parties. That is the most important accomplishment in Election 96.

For further information contact:

American Ireland
Education Foundation-PEC,
54 South Liberty Drive,
Stony Point, NY 10980
(914) 947-2726

Newsbits

Conor Cruise O'Brien is in the United States promoting his new book about Thomas Jefferson. O'Brien has already raised eyebrows in this country with his scathing portrayal of Jefferson. On Sunday November 17th, O'Brien appeared on the CSPAN program *Booknotes*. When asked if Jefferson were a twentieth century figure, what contemporary leader would he admire, O'Brien replied that the author of the Declaration of Independence would most likely admire a figure like Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot, a mass murderer and genocidal slaughterer of millions of Cambodians. O'Brien went on to call for President Clinton to renounce his admiration of Jefferson and that America needed to disavow Jefferson if she were to succeed as a society. (AIN-PEC 11/19/96)

The RUC waited for at least a month before interviewing the driver of a British Army personnel carrier which struck and killed a Derry man during rioting in the city last July, a civil rights group alleged yesterday. A Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) report has suggested the delay raises serious questions concerning investigations into the death of Dermot McShane during the post-Drumcree disturbances. Maggie Burns of the CAJ detailed findings of the report into the policing of events following the Drumcree stand-off entitled, "The Misrule of Law". The civil rights activist alleged plastic bullets had been fired in many situations which were not riotous, with those coming out of fast food outlets and discos coming under RUC fire. Ms. Burns said RUC officers in riot gear had entered hospitals where people injured in the disturbances were being treated, only to be asked to leave by staff. 'People have to be allowed to get to hospitals. Hospitals should be a place of safety,' she added. An RUC spokesman denied the charges and stressed that proper guidelines were followed involving the investigation and firing plastic bullets. (Irish News, 11/18/96)

Multicultural Great Hunger Memorial

by Kevin P. Murphy, *Massachusetts*

In a striking display of multi-ethnic unity, the city of Cambridge, Massachusetts has decided to place a memorial to the Great Irish Hunger of the 1840's on Historic Cambridge Common. Cambridge Common is in busy Harvard Square, across from Harvard University and on the site where George Washington took command of the American Army in 1775.

When grassroots organizers of the Cambridge Irish Great Hunger Memorial decided to petition the city historical society for a permit, they figured that they would encounter hostility from a predominantly Anglo-Saxon American Historical Commission. However, the grassroots effort, comprised of Cambridge citizens from the American Irish, African American, Cape Verdean and Portuguese-American communities so inspired the Commission that they gave their total support to the memorial.

Cambridge, a large, diverse city across the Charles River from Boston, is home to Harvard University, Radcliffe and M.I.T. and a long active American Irish community. American Irish Mayor Sheila Russell led a march from Cambridge City Hall to show support for the Irish Memorial. Flags of the U.S., Ireland, South Africa, Portugal and Cape Verde added a certain unity to the event.

The memorial will show a starving woman with a child and a starving man. It will be visible to hundreds of thousands each day as Harvard Square is a bus and subway center. The Great Irish Hunger will forever be memorialized in Cambridge.

Cambridge showed that, when all Americans work together, they can bring unity and show respect for the victims of racism and justice. While in New York City and Philadelphia American Irish leaders have had trouble finding support for a Great Hunger Memorial, Cambridge brought together all cultures to get the job done. Even here in Boston, the planning of a Great Hunger Memorial only involves political cronies and the so-called elite and is in trouble.

Talk of a Great Hunger Memorial in Boston has been ongoing since 1986. Caring, sincere people always get things done. Congratulations to the City of Cambridge for showing us all that there are still good, caring and honorable people out there who can turn the Irish experience of oppression into one that relates to all Americans. Congratulations also to the Flaherty and O'Connor families of Cambridge for putting up the initial funding for the Irish Memorial.

PEC President Finucane Honored

PEC National President John J. Finucane was honored at a reception commemorating the tenth anniversary of the passage of the MacBride Principles in New York.

The reception, which was held by New York State Senate Leader Martin Conner at John Jay College in New York City, gave the honor to Finucane because he and the PEC were one of the prime movers behind the passing of MacBride in New York and around the country.

Also honored with Finucane were Sr. Regina Murphy of the Sisters of Charity, Pat Doherty, NYC Comptroller's Office, Michael Cummings of the IAUC, John Thornton, former editor of the Irish Echo and Irish radio personality, Adrian Flannelly.

These honorees were the principal leaders in the fight for MacBride in New York. Congratulations, the honor is well-deserved.

St. Kitts Slavery Monument in Works

by Tom Culhane, *New Jersey*

St. Kitts is one of those places vacationers dream about: beautiful unspoiled beaches, luxury accommodations with all the amenities and tropical beauty preserved from overdevelopment by the strictest environmental laws in the Caribbean.

However, there is an important bit of the island's history that generally goes virtually unnoticed: the Irish history involving the unfortunate circumstances the Irish found themselves in during Cromwell's reign in the mid 1600's. St. Kitts was at the time the jewel of England's possessions in the New World as its shipping hub and largest sugar producer. Today several former sugar plantations have been renovated into exceptional resort properties such as Rawlins Plantation. Yet the 25,000 Irish men and women shipped in bondage as slaves by Cromwell to St. Kitts worked on the sugar plantations long before five star meals and pina coladas were being served.

English shipping of Irish slaves to the New World early has been documented in many works. Gwynn's *Analecta Hibernica* says that, in 1612 Irish were sent to the Amazon River settlements. Smith's, *Colonists in Bondage* speaks about English Proclamation of the year 1625 urging banishment overseas of "dangerous rogues" (Irish political prisoners). Newton tells how Antigua & Montserrat were occupied by English as early as 1632 with many Irish sent as planters and servants. In Dunn's, *Sugar & Slaves* - 1636, Ireland was already a prime source of supply for "servants". By 1637, the Irish heavily outnumbered the English colonists on Montserrat. Sixty-nine percent of all white people on the island were Irish.

During Cromwell's reign of terror in Ireland, the numbers of Irish sent into slavery were unlike anything previously experienced. In 1641, Ireland had a population of 1,466,000 and by 1652, the population was

616,000. According to Sir William Petty, 850,000 people were wasted by the sword, plague, famine or banishment during the Confederation War 1641-1652.

By the end of the war, (estimates vary) from 80,000 to 130,000 Irish men, women, and children were captured for sale as slaves to labor in England's expanding empire.

Cromwell burned the Irish forests to prevent people hiding from banishment as well as to clear the countryside for pasture land to feed cattle for English beef.

Over 100,000 young children who were orphans or had been taken from their Catholic parents were sent abroad into slavery in the West Indies, Virginia, and New England. It was hoped that they might lose their faith and all knowledge of their nationality, for, in most instances even their names were changed. Many of the 25,000 Irish slaves on St. Kitts died from tropical heat, disease, or overwork. Any Irish caught trying to escape were branded FT for Fugitive Traitor on their forehead. Other slaves were whipped, hung by their hands and set on fire, or beaten over the head until bloody for anything the English considered provocation. Over 150 Irish slaves were caught practicing Catholicism and were shipped to the tiny uninhabitable Crab Island where they were left to die of starvation.

Many of the Irish who survived these drastic conditions, and their descendants, were eventually shipped from the West Indies to the new English settlements in South Carolina.

It is this moving story that prompted the Minister of St. Kitts, Honorable G. A. Dwyer Astaphan, to meet with PEC member Tom Culhane. Mr. Culhane proposed that a monument be erected near where the Irish slaves were unloaded and sold to honor their memory. Such a monument will make certain that this dark period of Irish

Reproduce and Distribute

history will not be forgotten. Minister Astaphan hopes to make his mark by educating the next generation of St. Kitts and making them aware of the island's long history.

Minister Astaphan, eager to proceed and duly commemorate the saga of Irish slavery, recently introduced legislation before the St. Kitts Parliament to grant a suitable parcel of land for the monument. It is hoped that \$250,000 can be raised to cover all costs in this non-profit venture. Culhane feels the Irish around the world have been given a rare opportunity by Minister Astaphan; another country is now willing to help us tell the story of our shared Irish history. Tourists from around the world will view this monument for generations to come. Artists are invited to submit proposals for a sculpture subject to final approval based by a committee of St. Kitts residents.

For further information on this project, contact: Tom Culhane, 954 Stuyvesant Ave., Union, NJ 07083 (908) 964-2772.

Mr. Culhane is the Director of the American Irish-Celtic USA Stamp Committee.

(Ed. Note: PEC Illinois State Director, Bob West, has written extensively on this subject for PEC and was interviewed early this year on WABC radio's, Jay Diamond Show. Several of his articles appear in the PEC's publication, The American Irish.)

For further information contact:
**American Ireland
Education Foundation-PEC,
54 South Liberty Drive,
Stony Point, NY 10980
(914) 947-2726**

Does Your Library Carry Books on the Great Hunger

by Ed Walsh, *New York*

It is the law in New York and New Jersey that The Great Hunger be taught to students. Is it the law in your state? Immediately contact your state representatives and insist that they take steps to assure that similar legislation is passed in your state. For detailed information or to order books listed below contact PEC at (800) 777-6807.

New York State just passed legislation that incorporates the teaching of the "Great Irish Hunger" in New York State schools as part of the Holocaust, Genocide Studies Program. This need has always existed, but it is especially fitting as we currently remember the 150th anniversary of the 1845-50 Great Hunger.

Other states may follow!

Since young people will now be studying the Great Hunger, we need to get Irish history books into our library systems throughout the nation. Currently, few libraries have an extensive collection of these books. Here's the way to help.

The Central Library Systems tell us that book titles are added when the DEMAND is there. This means that we need to request these books from our local libraries (in person and by phone in order to be doubly effective). This will create the DEMAND at the branches and Irish history titles will be made widely available. Individual library branches also have their own book budgets for purchase.

Its up to us to contact them so that our children will have access to these books.

Some suggested readings on the Irish famine that you can request your local library to purchase are: *Paddy's Lament*, by Thomas Gallagher, *The Great Calamity* by Dr. Christine Kinealy and *The Great Hunger* by Cecil Woodham-Smith and the video, *When Ireland Starved*.



Members of the PEC in Colorado, left to right, Michael Heher, Jack Heher and Andrew Heher protest at the inclusion of the Royal Irish Regiment (RIR) at Colorado veterans ceremony.

Colorado PEC Chapter Does its Bit

by Terry Deem Reilly, *Colorado State Director*

On September 6th, the Colorado State Chapter of the PEC did its bit to derail the great British propaganda machine by protesting the inclusion of British Army Regiments (notably the Royal Irish Regiment, which now incorporates the Ulster Defence Regiment) at a wreath laying ceremony at the Colorado Veterans Memorial. Our small but doughty group of picketers stood in 90 plus degree heat for an hour and a half and managed to delay the ceremony (held as part of the Estes Park Highland Festival) for a full forty-five minutes. We were able to educate hundreds of people about the terrible human rights record of many of these British regiments. Let's just say that the organizers, who resembled a lot of guys dressed like parochial school girls, were not too pleased by our audacity to protest. Kudos to Andrew, Jack and Michael Heher, Sherry Liberato and her son, Alice Hubbert and all those who helped make the protest a success. We have them surrounded out here.

(Editors Note: the PEC would like to thank Terry Deem Reilly and all PEC members in Colorado who took time from their busy schedules, braved the heat and helped educate the public about Britain's human rights record in Northern Ireland. It is a testament to the strength of the members of the PEC all over the country. There was a time when British officials thought that they would only encounter opposition from the American-Irish community in areas such as Boston, New York and other parts of the northeast. They can now put Denver and the rest of the country on that list thanks to people like the Colorado PEC. Keep up the good work.)

Action Requested

Use the PEC Telephone Hotline
A Twenty-four Hour, Seven day a week service
Messages change every Sunday
(914) 429-7849

The Peace Process: A Way Forward

On October 8th the PEC issued a press release stating our reluctant conclusion that the peace process was not going to achieve anything worthwhile and calling for the British and Irish Governments to assume their responsibilities, to come up with their own proposals for real change in Northern Ireland and to put these changes to the Irish people, north and south for their approval.

The alternative as we saw it was a continuation of the chaos and stalling that has now been going on for years. Although at the time of the Downing Street Declaration and Framework Document the two governments held out the prospect of real if limited changes in Northern Ireland and to a certain extent in the Republic, the concurrent grant of a veto right to the Unionist parties and their conduct during the talks has torpedoed any hope of progress in "all party" talks. The good will to compromise just wasn't there on the Unionist side and perhaps it was not realistic from the beginning to think that the polarized political parties in Northern Ireland could ever sit down around a table to hammer out a "solution".

The IRA's return to limited violence, after they had met the original demands on them and had been ignored, was not the cause of the breakdown in the talks as is so widely reported in the media but was a result of the stalling. Some even think that the governments knew that the political parties would get nowhere and that their only real purpose in the whole charade was to get rid of the IRA, once and for all, by conditioning Sinn Fein participation on an IRA disbandment. Whatever the motives of the governments, the time has come to recognize that these talks are going nowhere - at least not in a direction that supporters of real change want to see.

The entire framework of the talks has shifted over time so that the main issue has now become whether or not Sinn Fein will be admitted to the talks - when everyone in Northern Ireland knows that the Unionists will not engage in serious discussions with Sinn Fein. The original ideas for change in political structures in Ireland has receded into the fog of the past. The time has come to hold the governments to their responsibilities, to take away their excuse for inaction. Of course we know that neither government wants this responsibility. They would be content to see the present fiasco drag on for years (certainly past the next election, and perhaps the next, etc.) so that they can place the onus on the IRA, the squabbling Northern political parties, etc.: in short, on anyone but themselves - the ones really responsible. We must not let them get away with this. The political party leaders on both sides will howl in dismay at the diminution of their importance. But what have they done to not deserve being pushed aside?

After all, isn't this all about the people of Ireland, not the careers of a few politicians? Can this be done? Of course,

Dan O'Kennedy (1922-1996)

Supporters of a united democratic Ireland lost a giant when Dan O'Kennedy passed away of heart failure on November 7th. Diminutive in stature but huge in heart and determination, Dan never shirked a fight for what he thought right. At the time of his death, Dan had just stepped down as President of the Irish-American Unity Conference. Dan believed passionately in the cause of peace, justice and equality in a united Ireland. He was a tireless champion of this cause. Ireland had no greater friend, supporter or advocate than Dan O'Kennedy. Now that he is gone, he will sorely be missed.

But this was far from Dan's only Irish activity. The Clare native was a longtime leader of the North American Feis Commission and past President of the Gaelic Athletic Association in the United States. Dan's undying devotion to his native Clare was clear, as anyone who ran into Dan after Clare's all-Ireland win in Hurling last year can attest. He also had many strong personal connections to political leaders in Ireland, especially within the Fianna Fail party.

One thing about Dan, you always knew where he stood on an issue. He never failed to criticize where he felt it was warranted. One of our favorite O'Kennedy stories was when Dan was at an event where an Irish government official was indulging in the prevailing revisionism surrounding the commemoration of the famine. Dan told this official in no uncertain terms to stop spouting that nonsense. He also exposed the claim by some Irish officials that the famine was a "shared experience" between Britain and Ireland. After Dan got through with them, we don't think we'll be hearing that line anymore!

In this era when many seek to claim the mantle of leaders of Irish America on the basis of political office, wealth or business prominence, Dan was one of the real leaders who earned his leadership and respect through hard work and dedication. Thanks for your time with us. Farewell Dan.

The PEC would like to extend its sympathies to the O'Kennedy family, his wife Gertie, his sons Padraig and Kevin, his daughters Maura and Eileen and his two grandchildren Kristen and Kayla.

if the two governments have the will and if they really do want a solution. A short deadline for action in the talks must be set and if it is not met - as it likely will not be - then the governments must act. Peace and the welfare of the people in Ireland depend on it.

Action Requests

Write the letters below (or call), preferably in your own words, or as is. Have friends, organizations, business associates, etc., do the same.

Mention in your letters that you are a member of the American Ireland Education Foundation-PEC.

1. **Honorable Bill Clinton**
The President
White House
Washington, DC 20500
Ph# (202) 456-1111
Fax# (202) 456-2461

Message: Congratulations on your reelection victory. We hope that you will keep the search for peace with justice in Ireland at the top of your foreign policy agenda. Without US involvement, the peace process will fail.

2. **Ambassador John Kerr**
British Embassy
3100 Massachusetts Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20008

Message: The time has come for your government to acknowledge its responsibility and apologize to the Irish people for the role of the then British government in Ireland's Great Hunger. This apology would be a step forward in the move for reconciliation in Ireland.

Casement Park Accused Are Not Forgotten

Three young Irishmen remain in British prisons as the result of dubious convictions in the killings of two British soldiers in the heated times following the Gibraltar killings of unarmed IRA members in 1988. The Irish people and indeed the world have never accepted the shifting British explanation of the Gibraltar killings. To the shock of the British and Irish governments, the funerals of the Gibraltar victims were widely supported in Ireland. An almost hysterical atmosphere was to follow when their funerals were attacked by a Loyalist gunman and further deaths occurred.

It was at the funeral of one of these latter victims that the Casement Park incident took place, in a highly charged, hair-trigger atmosphere. Two British soldiers drove a car into the funeral procession, were attacked, pulled out weapons, and were ultimately shot to death by unknown persons- presumably IRA members - who have never been arrested to this day.

The three young men, Patrick Kane, Michael Timmons and Sean Kelly, never accused of the killings, were convicted essentially for being in the crowd when the soldiers were seized. For this they have received life sentences. This was done under a peculiar British criminal law which attributed to them the "common purpose" of the killings. The non-jury court which convicted them found that they "knew full well" that the soldiers were going to be killed even though there was not one scintilla of evidence that this was the case nor that they knew the actual killers. In the case of Kelly, the Court shifted the burden of proof to him because he chose to remain silent and not testify, under the now notorious judicial rule allowing this. The common purpose doctrine has been widely criticized for years in international legal circles. A variety of it was used to convict the "Sharpville Six" by the South African apartheid regime in the early eighties, convictions which brought a world-wide outcry. Somehow the wider human rights community hasn't noticed the Casement Accused.

Appeal rights have been exhausted by the defendants and they await an early 1997 hearing for parole. In a recent brilliant legal analysis of their convictions, the British lawyer Peter Thornton has shown that not only is the application of the common purpose doctrine to these individuals questionable, but that, even if the doctrine is accepted, the convicting judge made serious errors in the application of the doctrine to the cases. We can only hope that this will have some impact on the reviewing authorities.

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